



CONFRATERNITIES AS INSTRUMENTS OF PLACE BRANDING Constructing the Andalusia Brand

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Confraternal Marketing Place Branding Andalusia Brand Cultural Identity Intangible Heritage Territorial Communication Cultural Tourism	<i>Beyond their religious dimension, Andalusian confraternities (cofradías) constitute a strategic asset in territorial brand construction within the framework of place branding. This study, based on ten in-depth interviews with experts in place branding and cultural communication, analyses their contribution to Andalusian identity, their role in symbolic management, and the risks and opportunities associated with their integration into branding strategies. The findings indicate that these confraternities strengthen the sense of belonging and project an image that is both authentic and emotionally resonant, combining tangible and intangible heritage. Identified risks include folklorisation, political instrumentalisation and social exclusion, while opportunities relate to international positioning linked to cultural and spiritual tourism. The study concludes that their strategic incorporation must be grounded in ethical, inclusive and participatory governance, ensuring the preservation of their authenticity and their value as a living cultural expression of Andalusia.</i>

Received: 12/ 16 / 2025

Accepted: 03/ 20 / 2026

1. Introduction

The management of territorial identity through place branding has become a strategic instrument for projecting the cultural, historical and emotional values of a region to both internal and external audiences. In this context, Andalusia, with its rich heritage and cultural diversity, offers a wide range of symbolic assets that may be incorporated into its brand narrative. Among these, the confraternal movement, deeply embedded in the social, religious and cultural life of the region, stands out for its capacity to mobilise collective emotions, foster social cohesion and project a distinctive and differentiated identity (Berraquero-Rodríguez and Cristófol, 2025). Holy Week and the confraternities are not merely religious manifestations; rather, they constitute complex cultural phenomena in which art, music, spirituality, social organisation and historical memory converge, articulating an identity narrative with considerable potential for territorial positioning.

The academic literature on place branding highlights the importance of integrating tangible and intangible heritage as central components in the construction of authentic and sustainable narratives (Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2010). Within this analytical framework, popular religiosity and confraternities may be understood as symbolic resources which, like other forms of heritage, generate shared and widely recognisable meanings. However, their incorporation into branding strategies necessitates ethical and participatory governance capable of avoiding processes of trivialisation, folklorisation or the exclusion of particular social groups (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013).

This study situates itself within this line of inquiry by analysing the role of the confraternal movement as a strategic asset for place branding in Andalusia. Drawing on in-depth interviews with experts in communication, heritage and cultural management, it examines perceptions of the identity value of confraternities, their function in the symbolic construction of the territorial brand, and the opportunities and risks associated with their integration into positioning strategies. This qualitative approach enables the identification of nuances and tensions that are difficult to capture through exclusively quantitative methods, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between living heritage and territorial identity.

At this stage, the study objectives are formulated as follows:

SO1: How do confraternities contribute to the construction of Andalusia's cultural identity?

SO2: What role do they play in the symbolic construction and governance of the territorial brand?

SO3: What risks and opportunities arise from their integration into a place branding strategy?

This research is grounded in the premise that incorporating the confraternal movement into the narrative of the Andalusia Brand should not be understood merely as a promotional strategy, but rather as an opportunity to strengthen the authenticity, diversity and social cohesion that underpin territorial identity. Accordingly, the study proposes an analytical approach that combines the theoretical framework of place branding with the perspectives of expert stakeholders, thereby fostering a dialogue between academic scholarship and professional practice.

The reflections derived from this analysis provide conceptual and practical insights for the design of territorial communication strategies that are sensitive to cultural context and capable of balancing tourism promotion with the preservation of the heritage and social values that define Andalusia.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Place Branding and Territorial Brand Building

The terminological debate surrounding place branding has accompanied the evolution of the field since its inception. Early on, Anholt questioned whether the term *brand* is analytically useful, given that places undeniably possess an image, while warning that *branding* may evoke the idea of marketing "tricks" capable of rapidly transforming that image. He later qualified this position by insisting that the reputation of places changes through substantive actions rather than

promotional campaigns (Anholt, 2010; 2024). At the same time, the seminal contributions of Govers and Go helped consolidate the field, while also highlighting the lack of conceptual consensus and the need for theoretical and methodological reference points to guide its development. More recently, Kavaratzis has described the maturation of the discipline, noting its shift beyond product-oriented and promotional reductionism towards approaches that foreground participation, complexity and governance.

Within this context, it becomes essential to distinguish between place marketing and place branding. The former refers to the planning and implementation of actions aimed at specific target markets, often with an instrumental emphasis on promotion, campaigns or demand attraction. The latter concerns the strategic management of reputation derived from a shared and lived identity, projected both internally and externally over the long term (Kavaratzis, 2008; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2010). Govers (2013) famously criticised the fetishisation of logos and slogans, while Govers and Go (2009) argued that the essence of branding lies in constructing distinctive and meaningful associations rather than in the production of visual artefacts. Building on this distinction, subsequent scholarship has proposed differentiating promotion, marketing and branding as analytically distinct yet complementary layers of territorial strategy (Boisen et al., 2018). This clarification has contributed to understanding place branding as a form of public policy rather than merely a communication exercise, with its own instruments, actors and evaluative frameworks.

Conceptually, place branding operates through three interrelated dimensions: identity, image and reputation. Identity refers to the shared meanings, both tangible and intangible, that define a place, including its history, practices, landscapes and symbols. Image denotes the cognitive and affective representations held by internal and external audiences. Reputation constitutes the cumulative outcome of experiences and perceptions over time; it is slower to evolve, more relational in nature and more resistant to change than image (Anholt, 2010; Govers, 2011). From this perspective, place branding functions as a network of associations in the minds of diverse audiences, including residents, visitors, businesses, investors, talent and media, and translates into brand equity in terms of satisfaction, loyalty, awareness and perceived quality when those associations are distinctive and coherent. This analytical framework has been further refined through the distinction between destination branding, primarily oriented towards tourists, and place branding, which addresses a broader range of stakeholders. Research suggests that it is the complexity of the brand, rather than its simplification, that fosters identification among residents and consequently attachment and advocacy (Zenker et al., 2017).

Recent developments in the field converge around three principal approaches: symbolic, which understands the brand as a differentiating construct; cognitive, which focuses on mental associations; and experiential, which conceives the brand as lived, multisensory and embodied, each with distinct implications for brand management (Eshuis and Ripoll-González, 2024). This triadic framework resonates with Anholt's Competitive Identity Hexagon, which provides a useful structure for articulating public policy across dimensions such as exports, tourism, politics, investment, culture and people, and governance, while consistently subordinating communication to coherent policies and actions, what Anholt terms the "diplomacy of facts" (Anholt, 2010).

Consequently, the construction of the territorial brand cannot be dissociated from processes of governance and co-production involving local actors. For over a decade, Spanish scholarship has emphasised the role of cultural identity and intangible heritage as a differentiating core, advocating methodologies grounded in the individual and collective identities of the territory (De San Eugenio, 2013). More recent studies reinforce the importance of participation and openness as conditions for brand sustainability and inter-institutional cooperation (Ginesta et al., 2024). At the same time, the growing focus on future generations, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, introduces a temporal dimension that affects both the narrative and the implementation of branding strategies. More broadly, literature published between 2023 and 2024 highlights processes of value co-creation and the tensions inherent in stakeholder participation (Reynolds, Doering, et al., 2023; Reynolds, Peattie, et al., 2024), as well as the paradoxes and practical

challenges associated with participatory municipal rebranding processes (Källström and Siljeklint, 2024).

This transition from promotion to strategic reputation management, grounded in lived identity, collaborative governance and evaluative metrics, is also reflected in sector-specific practices that mobilise cultural and sporting assets as reputational drivers. These examples illustrate the centrality of narrative coherence and the alignment between public policies, investment decisions and communication strategies (Satish et al., 2024). In this sense, contemporary place branding does not simply embellish a territory; rather, it articulates it on the basis of tangible and intangible identities and practices, engages public, private and civil society actors, and coordinates policies so that actions substantiate promises (Anholt, 2011; Kavaratzis, 2024; Mabillard et al., 2024).

In the case of Andalusia, this theoretical framework suggests that cultural identity, including popular religiosity and its confraternities, can function as both a brand asset and a vector of social cohesion. However, it generates reputation only when embedded in coherent and co-created policies, events and practices. Symbols are significant, yet reputation ultimately depends on sustained action and collaborative governance over time (Anholt, 2024; De San Eugenio, 2013; Eshuis and Ripoll-González, 2024; Ginesta et al., 2024).

2.2. Cultural Identity and Intangible Heritage as Brand Assets

Cultural identity and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) constitute fundamental pillars in the construction of an authentic territorial brand capable of taking root within local communities. According to UNESCO (2003), intangible cultural heritage encompasses practices, knowledge and expressions that communities recognise as part of their cultural heritage (Art. 2.1). This understanding broadens the notion of heritage beyond the merely material or monumental, placing at its centre practices, knowledge, rituals and collective expressions capable of sustaining living identities and shared narratives.

From a *place branding* perspective, ICH functions as a differentiating element and a strategic resource: it provides authenticity, connects the brand with shared histories and transforms the place into the narrative of a living legacy (Shakya and Vagnarelli, 2024).

Recent scholarship confirms the connection between intangible heritage, social cohesion and territorial branding. Vera Solorzano and Mendoza Mendoza (2024) emphasise how ICH acts as a 'link between a people and its history', reinforcing community identity in the face of modernising and globalising forces. European case studies further demonstrate that integrating ICH as a local development asset benefits community well-being and strengthens prospects for sustainable tourism (Shakya and Vagnarelli, 2024).

The recent inscription of Asturian cider on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity provides a clear illustration of this dynamic. The recognition reinforces not only a gastronomic symbol but also the communal ethos of Asturias and its authentic cultural appeal to domestic and international audiences. Such acknowledgements enhance collective self-esteem and consolidate a distinctive territorial narrative, while opening opportunities for cultural tourism, the promotion of emblematic products and the preservation of traditional knowledge.

In urban contexts, ICH reinforces the territorial brand through the visible enactment of shared traditions and symbols. Debates surrounding the recognition of certain forms of urban culture in Madrid demonstrate that coherence between symbolic recognition and everyday practice is essential. For intangible expressions to consolidate cultural identity, they must be actively lived and socially recognised rather than merely institutionalised through administrative declarations.

At a theoretical level, Fuentes Fariás (2024) conceptualises the intangible dimension of historic urban space as a resource for identity formation, emphasising the interrelationship between heritage, landscape and collective memory in the symbolic construction of territory. This perspective is further supported by research in Latin America, including the work of Bassols i Gardella et al. (2025), which advances a cultural approach to heritage-making, one in which material and symbolic dimensions coexist within the narrative of place.

Empirical research further demonstrates the role of ICH in strengthening sense of place. Qiu et al. (2023) show that intangible heritage designations in urban destinations enhance perceived distinctiveness and increase visitors' behavioural intentions. Guo (2025) similarly argues that recognition of ICH among urban residents fosters belonging and reinforces shared identity.

In parallel, contemporary approaches to brand co-creation increasingly incorporate cultural heritage as a vehicle for citizen participation. Initiatives such as the project *De tal cepa tal sarmiento* in Castilla-La Mancha revitalise proverbs, expressions and community murals as visual articulations of identity, combining tradition with participatory practice within an empowering territorial narrative.

Cultural identity and intangible heritage therefore emerge as strategic assets in territorial branding. The challenge lies not in the mere display of traditions, but in their lived enactment, revitalisation and community-driven narration. Such practices reinforce rootedness, cultivate authenticity and sustain a narrative that connects past, present and future. In doing so, they strengthen not only the territory's external reputation but also its internal cohesion, ensuring that the brand is constructed from within the community and remains aligned with the identities and practices of those who inhabit it.

2.3. Popular Religiosity and Confraternities in the Context of Territorial Branding

Popular religiosity in Andalusia constitutes a deeply integrative phenomenon, capable of articulating community and identity. Confraternities function as living organisations that connect devotion with symbolic heritage and collective memory. Research employing the Delphi methodology indicates that so-called confraternal marketing is emerging as a specific field, distinct from religious or cultural marketing, and that Andalusian confraternities require more comprehensive forms of management adapted to their contemporary characteristics (Cristòfol-Rodríguez and Berraquero-Rodríguez, 2025). This need for integrated management reinforces the idea that confraternities operate as living brands within their territories.

The strategic dimension of this approach also extends to digital communication. Within the framework of territorial branding, Cristòfol et al. (2025) apply mixed methodologies to analyse the resilience and coherence of territorial brands in digital environments. In their study of the Algarve in Portugal, they demonstrate how identity, participatory narratives and emotional content shape a coherent and compelling image that integrates cultural and natural elements (Cristòfol et al., 2025). This perspective is relevant to the potential positioning of confraternities, which may likewise function as brands combining symbolic narrative with recognisable visual identity.

A particularly illustrative case of this symbolic and strategic convergence is the Hermandad de la Macarena, which from a branding perspective operates as a leading reference in religiosity and cultural activity due to its professional management, effective communication and deeply rooted symbolic capital (Cadena SER, 2025). This intersection between devotion and strategy underscores the relevance of understanding confraternities as territorial brands that manage meanings as well as collective memories.

Popular religiosity also underpins institutional initiatives that position it as a cornerstone of identity and cultural marketing. Multidisciplinary projects linking history, sociology and heritage studies examine how devotional expressions articulate regional symbolic narratives. Such systemic approaches reinforce the argument that confraternities contribute to the construction of a cohesive cultural narrative that extends beyond their strictly devotional dimension. Their heritage value is not confined to intangible practices but also encompasses visible aesthetic manifestations such as sacred imagery, embroidery and religious art, which enrich the symbolic experience of the territory. Economic analyses in Málaga show that confraternities allocate a significant proportion of their budgets to the conservation and promotion of artistic heritage, thereby consolidating their status as tangible cultural brands.

Adaptability further characterises the confraternal sphere. During the pandemic, confraternities remained active through social media, disseminating digital exhibitions of religious heritage via platforms such as Twitter. However, findings indicate that a higher volume

of posts did not necessarily translate into greater public engagement (Cristófol et al., 2023). This experience underscores the difficulty of moving beyond symbolic presence towards communication strategies capable of generating meaningful interaction within the community.

The strength of confraternities as branding agents lies in their articulation of tradition, heritage, narrative and symbolic governance. They are not merely objects of market logic, but living narrators of shared identities. The emergence of confraternal marketing as a field of study, together with analyses of institutional and digital practices, confirms that confraternities and popular religiosity function as territorial assets endowed with a deeply rooted and authentic brand vocation, capable of projecting the living identity of Andalusia across time and towards diverse audiences.

3. Methodology

This research adopts an exploratory qualitative design, appropriate for analysing the confraternal movement as a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon within place branding processes. Qualitative inquiry is grounded in the interpretative understanding of social reality and in engagement with participants' subjectivities, allowing for a nuanced exploration of their experiences and interpretative frameworks. In contrast to quantitative approaches centred on measurement and generalisation, qualitative research privileges depth over breadth. In the present study, this objective necessitated the use of in-depth interviews.

Although the data collection instrument resembled a questionnaire, the technique employed was not the Delphi method, as initially envisaged during the research design phase. The Delphi method is characterised by iterative rounds of consultation and feedback among experts with the aim of achieving consensus. By contrast, this study was based on a single round of open-ended questions.

This methodological adjustment was further justified by limitations expressed by several participants regarding their specific knowledge of the confraternal movement, which raised concerns about the appropriateness and validity of a consensus-driven process such as Delphi. The research was therefore conducted as a series of nine in-depth interviews, a well-established technique for examining social subjectivity in academic inquiry.

For example, one expert in communication and marketing described his relationship with the confraternal movement as distant and acknowledged that his responses, although sincere, lacked the depth required to sustain a consensus process. Similarly, an expert in public administration indicated that the topic fell outside his primary field of expertise, further reinforcing the decision not to impose a consensus-oriented methodology.

In this way, the interviews captured a diversity of perspectives and degrees of familiarity, including the explicit recognition by one participant that he was unable to respond to a specific question. Rather than weakening the study, this transparency enhances it by revealing the complexity and specialised nature of the field.

The sampling strategy was purposive, with nine experts selected on the basis of their relevance and experience in the fields of place branding, communication, public administration, history and marketing. This heterogeneity of profiles was intended to enrich the analysis by incorporating perspectives from diverse areas of expertise. Selection criteria included professional and/or academic experience in the management or study of territorial brands. Participants were contacted via their institutional email addresses and provided informed consent, acknowledging that their responses would be treated anonymously and confidentially for research purposes.

The principal investigator acted as a neutral moderator, limiting his role to presenting the questions and collecting responses without intervening to construct categories or actively seek consensus, as would be characteristic of a Delphi process. The sample comprises professionals and academics whose profiles approach the phenomenon from different disciplinary angles, a necessary condition for research aiming to capture a multifaceted understanding of the object of study. Table 1 presents the profiles of the experts interviewed in order to contextualise their

contributions, using anonymous codes to safeguard their identities in accordance with the research design.

Table 1. Coding of Interviewees

Coding	Area of expertise
E1	Place branding and sports communication
E2	Place branding and communication
E3	Place branding and communication
E4	Place branding and public administration
E5	Place branding
E6	Place branding and communication
E7	Place branding and economic history
E8	Place branding and marketing
E9	Place branding, marketing and tourism
E10	Place branding and urban development

Source: Own elaboration, 2026.

The data collection instrument consisted of a semi structured questionnaire composed of open-ended questions, designed to guide the discussion towards key issues related to place branding and the role of the confraternal movement in Andalusian identity. The interview protocol addressed themes ranging from the general evolution of place branding to more specific questions concerning the tangible and intangible dimensions of the confraternal movement, its values, its social relevance, and the opportunities and risks associated with its integration into the Andalusia Brand.

The responses were examined through a process of thematic analysis. In the first stage, each expert's responses were coded, identifying the most significant elements and organising them according to the predefined analytical axes established in the research design: confraternities as symbolic assets, institutional use of confraternities, tourism and cultural branding, and risks or tensions in the institutional appropriation of the confraternal phenomenon. The analysis was based on an analytical synthesis of the material, identifying both points of convergence and divergence. Verbatim quotations were incorporated to illustrate the key ideas expressed by the experts, in accordance with the requirements established for the presentation of results. This narrative and analytical approach ensures that the findings not only synthesise the perspectives collected but also preserve the richness and nuance of the participants' assessments.

4. Results

The analysis of the interviews conducted with ten specialists confirms that the confraternal movement occupies a central place in Andalusian cultural identity, although its use as a territorial brand resource must be approached with tact and foresight. The most evident consensus is that it is a symbolic asset of great value, capable of projecting a distinctive image of the region and arousing collective emotions. "It is something symbolic and genuine" (E1, E5), states one expert, while another defines it as "an ambassador of the most intense, most deeply rooted, most emotional culture" (E3). For E6, "it is a clear reflection of the Andalusian soul", and E9 considers it "a total cultural phenomenon" that combines art, faith, music, community and belonging. Even those who have no direct link to the confraternities recognise their distinctive character: "The confraternal movement is religion, but at the same time it is popular culture. Andalusian identity, without a doubt" (E1).

Beyond its symbolic dimension, the interviewees distinguish between tangible and intangible heritage. Among the tangible elements, they mention Baroque sacred imagery, including artists such as Juan de Mesa (E7), processional vestments (E4), gold and silver work (E8) and embroidery (E10). At an intangible level, rituals (E3), processional marches (E6), saeta singing (E2) and

shared historical memory (E9) stand out. As E2 summarises, “the confraternal movement is an essential and deeply significant component of Andalusia’s cultural heritage, both in its tangible and intangible dimensions”. For E7, this value lies in the fact that “it is shared by different social and/or ideological groups”, which reinforces its role as an element of social cohesion.

With regard to its use in promoting the Andalusia Brand, most consider it viable if managed with sensitivity and respect. “Consciously integrating the confraternal movement is viable, appropriate and strategically valuable” (E2), argues one specialist, while E5 stresses the importance of basing the approach on “discovering the inner workings of Andalusia” through ritual experience. E9 insists that “its value as a collective artistic expression, shared emotion and living cultural legacy” should be highlighted, and E8 sees it as an opportunity to showcase a heritage that “speaks a universal language” and transcends religious boundaries. The narratives, they agree, should focus on culture and heritage, avoiding its reduction to a mere “picturesque spectacle” (E2) or “fairground attraction” (E6).

Audience segmentation is another point of agreement. Experts mention cultural and spiritual tourists (E2, E6), the academic community (E8), the silver economy (E3) and families with adolescent children (E3) as priority audiences. E1 proposes “attracting those who seek profound narratives” in an increasingly materialistic global context, while E4 suggests combining cultural promotion with educational activities that enable understanding of the history and meaning of the movement. In this context, sensory elements such as “smell, music and silence” (E6) are perceived as resources for conveying authenticity.

In terms of opportunities, several interviewees highlight the potential to strengthen Andalusia’s international positioning. E2 and E6 agree that the connection with religious and cultural tourism can differentiate the region from other destinations in southern Europe, and E8 sees the confraternal movement as a vehicle for communicating universal values such as solidarity and intergenerational participation. E1 adds that it can be “a response to superficial tourism” by offering emotionally charged experiences, and E9 points out that “turning the street into a ritual and collective space” projects a unique image. Even E10, from an urban development perspective, appreciates how the movement activates and enhances public space.

However, these advantages do not overshadow the risks. Folklorisation and trivialisation are the most frequently mentioned threats (E1, E2, E5, E9), as they would reduce the phenomenon to a consumer product and could provoke social rejection. E6 warns against the “fairground attraction”, and E9 cautions that “its commercial trivialisation, disconnecting it from its deeper meaning” would constitute a serious mistake. Another risk highlighted is the exclusion of certain groups, such as LGBTQ+ people, immigrants or non-believers (E4, E9), which, according to E9, would project “a partial, situated and selective identity” that does not represent Andalusian diversity. E7 adds that internal differences between confraternities in different cities make it difficult to present a unified narrative, and E2 warns against “political or tourist exploitation” that could undermine trust with communities.

To mitigate these risks, the experts propose ethical and participatory management strategies. E2 and E9 advocate involving confraternities, artists, cultural managers, secular groups, young people and minorities in the design of narratives. E1 suggests “a genuine dialogue between believers and non-believers”, while E5 calls for “red lines” to be established to ensure respect. E8 insists that the narrative must be “built with everyone” and not imposed from above, and E3 stresses that pride in identity must be accompanied by respect for other beliefs. For E4, the process should also be educational, helping society to understand the complexity of the phenomenon and to appreciate it in its proper measure. In short, as E9 summarises, it is a “symbolic battlefield” that requires sensitivity, knowledge and balance.

An overall reading of the interviews shows a consensus that the confraternal movement functions both as a root and as a bridge: a root that anchors Andalusia in centuries of history and a bridge that connects with audiences around the world through beauty, emotion and a sense of community. Its potential to strengthen the Andalusia Brand is undeniable, but it can only be realised if its authenticity is preserved, sensitivities are respected and it is managed from an inclusive and ethical perspective. Experts agree that it is not a resource that can be exploited in a simplistic way; it requires, in the words of E2, “ensuring ethical and participatory management,

with a heritage-based and non-partisan approach”, capable of integrating the different voices of Andalusian society and projecting an image that is both true to its essence and open to the world.

Table 2. Results

Thematic axis	Expert assessment	Representative quote
Symbolic asset	Consensus on its nature as a valuable, genuine and distinctive identity asset.	“The confraternity movement is religion, but at the same time popular culture. Andalusian identity, without a doubt” (E1).
Heritage	Recognition of its value as tangible and intangible heritage, articulating history, art, spirituality and community.	“The confraternity movement is an essential and deeply significant component of Andalusia’s cultural heritage, both in its tangible and intangible dimensions” (E2).
Opportunities	Potential for international positioning and attracting cultural and spiritual tourists, with a focus on art and emotion.	“Consciously integrating the confraternal movement into Andalusia’s territorial brand strategy... is viable, appropriate and strategically valuable” (E2).
Risks	Trivialisation, folklorisation, political exploitation and exclusion of non-confraternity or secularised audiences.	“The main risks are the folklorisation of the movement, reducing it to an empty spectacle; its commercial trivialisation...” (E9).
Ethical management	Need for a participatory approach, respect for sensitivities, contextualisation and balance with other cultural expressions.	“Ensure ethical and participatory management, with a heritage-based and non-partisan approach” (E2).

Source: Own elaboration, 2026.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The results obtained show a consensus among experts in recognising the confraternal movement as a highly valuable identity asset for Andalusia, coinciding with the findings of Berraquero-Rodríguez and Cristófol (2025) in considering the confraternities not only as religious manifestations but also as articulating elements of a living heritage that integrates art, music, spirituality and social organisation. This finding responds directly to SO1, confirming that the confraternities play a central role in the construction of Andalusian cultural identity. The combination of tangible heritage, such as Baroque sacred imagery, vestments, and gold and silver work, and intangible heritage, including rituals, processional music and popular devotion, allows for an integrative narrative that connects with historical memory and collective experience, in line with the approaches of Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) regarding the need to incorporate culturally significant symbols into territorial branding strategies.

In relation to SO2, the role of the confraternities in the symbolic management of the territorial brand is evident in their ability to project a cohesive and emotionally powerful image of Andalusia. Experts emphasise that their value lies not only in their impact on tourism but also in their potential to communicate authenticity, belonging and cultural continuity. This approach coincides with Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2010), who argue that the strongest territorial brands are those that convey a coherent narrative between what the community is, what it aspires to be and what it projects to the outside world. The confraternities, as “ambassadors of the most intense, deeply rooted and emotional culture” of the region, offer a narrative resource capable of transcending the religious sphere, presenting themselves as total cultural manifestations that can be

incorporated into place branding narratives aimed at diverse audiences, from cultural and spiritual tourists to the silver economy.

However, as Eshuis and Edwards (2013) warn, the incorporation of symbolic elements into the territorial brand involves risks that must be carefully managed. In response to SO3, the results highlight three main risks: the folklorisation and trivialisation of the confraternal movement, political or commercial exploitation, and the exclusion of certain groups due to its confessional nature. Folklorisation, understood as the reduction of tradition to an empty spectacle, could disconnect the movement from its deeper meaning and generate social rejection. This risk is consistent with that identified by Berraquero-Rodríguez and Cristófol (2025), who point out that any use of popular religiosity in communication strategies must safeguard its authenticity and intrinsic meanings.

Added to these risks are tensions arising from the internal heterogeneity of the confraternal movement, which makes it difficult to construct a unified narrative. This diversity, although a reflection of the cultural richness of Andalusia, poses a challenge of coherence for place branding, which requires clear and consistent messages, as noted by Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013). Furthermore, the perception of the confraternities as a partial identity, more closely linked to certain ideological, religious or urban profiles, requires consideration of inclusive mechanisms that allow for their integration into a plural regional narrative.

In terms of opportunities, experts identify potential for the international positioning of the Andalusia Brand based on the aesthetic, ritual and community dimensions of the confraternities. This projection could be linked to emerging trends in cultural and spiritual tourism, as well as immersive experiences that highlight intangible heritage. In line with the reflections of Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2010), the use of this resource must be grounded in a balance between external promotion and internal preservation, avoiding commercial uses that could erode its social legitimacy.

The discussion shows that the integration of the confraternities into Andalusia's place branding strategy requires an ethical and participatory approach. Experts propose involving members of the confraternities, artists, cultural managers, secular groups, young people and minorities in the design of narratives, which would allow for the articulation of a more representative and respectful discourse. This recommendation is consistent with the approaches of Berraquero-Rodríguez and Cristófol (2025), who emphasise collaborative cultural governance as a tool for ensuring the symbolic sustainability of heritage elements.

The analysis carried out allows several key conclusions to be drawn:

Contribution to cultural identity: The confraternities constitute a central element of Andalusian identity, combining material and immaterial dimensions that reinforce both the sense of belonging and the external projection of the region.

Symbolic brand management: They possess significant potential for constructing authentic and emotionally resonant narratives within the framework of place branding, capable of reaching diverse audiences.

Risks and safeguards: Trivialisation, folklorisation and social exclusion represent tangible risks that require careful management grounded in community participation and respect for cultural and religious diversity.

The following recommendations are also proposed:

Incorporate the confraternities into the Andalusia Brand through narratives that prioritise their heritage and community value over their strictly religious dimension, thereby facilitating connection with global audiences.

Develop cultural governance mechanisms that include all stakeholders, ensuring the representativeness and sustainability of strategies.

Avoid political or commercial exploitation by establishing clear red lines that safeguard authenticity and respect for traditions.

In short, the confraternal movement, managed with sensitivity and an inclusive perspective, can become a strategic place branding instrument for Andalusia, capable of projecting an image rich in history, emotion and cultural diversity to the world without relinquishing the preservation of its deepest meanings.

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